



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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**MAYOR**  
Amanda M. Dewey

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)  
Christopher S. Brittan Powell  
Jason W. Papanikolas  
Ethan D. Sweep

## Worksession Minutes August 3, 2020 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to comment by telephone and email. This meeting was broadcast with audio only due to technical difficulties.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Interim Town Manager Laura Allen and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### **1. Announcements**

Mayor Dewey made announcements regarding the closure of Pontiac Street between Edmonston Road and 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue after a watermain break, a Four Cities Coalition request to extend the comment period on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Beltway widening project, a Low Impact Development Center survey regarding improvements for Pop's Park, a National Night In parade in lieu of the traditional National Night Out celebration, and School Board Member Joshua Thomas' system for answering inquiries about the reopening of schools.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy added that the comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Beltway widening project may well be extended for 30 days. Further, Elaine Colihan, a 57-year resident of Berwyn Heights, passed away last week.

### **2. Ceremonial Items**

**Service Award for Mayor Isler and CM Osmond:** Former Mayor Stephen Isler and Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Osmond were present to accept an award for their service on the Town Council. Mayor Isler thanked the Council for the plaque and said he misses the interaction with his former colleagues. He thinks the Council is doing a great job, especially considering the ongoing pandemic. CM Osmond also thanked the Council for the recognition. He is pleased to see a full Council in place that is devoted to governing the Town. In his personal life, he is writing a book that will be published in the fall.

### **3. Discussion Items**

**Council Rule on sidewalks:** Mayor Dewey explained the Council had considered adopting a Council Rule that would require the Town to consider building sidewalks whenever road improvements are made. This was a recommendation of the Walkable, Bikeable Berwyn Heights Task Force (WBBH), which in February submitted a report to the Council with a list of recommendations to make the Town more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. CM Papanikolas added that the Council planned to make it incumbent on the Council to build sidewalks whenever road projects are approved, unless there is

compelling reason not to do it. A Council Rule was proposed as the mechanism to implement such a policy.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Council Rules may not be the best vehicle for the policy; an ordinance may be more permanent;
- Alternative safety measures should be considered in addition to sidewalks;
- Accommodations for bicyclists should also be considered when roads are renovated;
- Cost of sidewalks should be considered as part of policy.

It was agreed that a policy should not require a specific outcome but only require consideration of building pedestrian or bicycle facilities when roads are improved. Staff will review ordinances and Council Rules to determine where the policy would fit best.

Mayor Dewey asked the Council to look over WBBH's list of recommendations and identify some priorities. The following comments were made:

- One-way streets could be a cost-effective way to restrict vehicular traffic and create more space for pedestrian and bicycle facilities but would likely require more planning and public hearings.
- Proposed safety improvements for Pontiac/ Edmonston Road intersection should be taken up while WSSC is working on fixing the watermains. This might include construction of a wheelchair ramp for the sidewalk and adding 'don't block the box' signage to the intersection but may require adoption of a regulation by the Town.

TM Allen will follow up with WSSC about making improvements at the Pontiac/ Edmonston Road intersection.

***Green Team carbon footprint report:*** Mayor Dewey explained that Berwyn Heights is required to take a combination of actions to improve the environment to achieve recertification as a Sustainable Maryland community. One of the actions Sustainable Maryland strongly recommends, and the Green Team has now undertaken, is a municipal carbon footprint assessment based on CO2 emissions from fuel and energy use. A breakdown of the Town's carbon footprint shows that Police and Public Works vehicles are responsible for 26% and 21% of the Town's CO2 emissions, respectively. Another important finding is that streetlights are a significant source of indirect emissions.

The Green Team's report makes several recommendations to reduce the municipal carbon footprint, including:

- Prioritizing energy efficiency when renovating Town buildings, as with the current feasibility study to relocate the police station to the municipal building;
- Prioritizing electric and hybrid vehicles when purchasing new vehicles;
- Exploring more energy efficient alternatives, such as LEDs, to replace streetlights currently in use.

In discussion, Councilmembers sought clarification about ownership of streetlights and responsibility for upgrading fixtures, expressed interest in light pollution reduction, motion activated lighting, and addressing dark areas in Town. Staff was asked to locate an inventory of dark areas made by NW/EP and submitted to a previous Town manager. TM Allen will look into obtaining sample streetlights to see which lights the Council and residents might prefer.

The Council further discussed whether to mandate consideration of electric or hybrid vehicles when a new vehicle is being purchased. It was agreed that the current Green Purchasing Policy already commits the Town to use best practices in sustainable procurement, which covers purchase of vehicles.

***E-newsletter:*** Mayor Dewey said the Council has looked for ways to reach residents with more up-to-date news than the monthly Bulletin. The Council thinks that an electronic newsletter sent via email to residents could fill that role. MPT Kulpa-Eddy provided a mock-up of an e-newsletter to discuss format and content. A process for publication also needs to be determined, which will likely be different before and after a Public Information Aide (PIA) is hired.

In discussion, the following was proposed:

- Draft e-newsletter would be discussed by Council at 1<sup>st</sup> worksession of the month and possibly approved at Town meeting;
- E-newsletter would be released every 2 to 3 weeks without necessarily being approved by the Council once staff is taking the lead on it. Council would submit items by email and only take the newsletter up at a meeting if there is disagreement about content.
- In terms of format of the draft newsletter, it presents Town news on page 1 and news from the County and the wider area on page 2. A listing of upcoming meetings and events might be added at the end.

Clerk Harper explained that the e-newsletter, once posted to the Town website, would be sent to anyone who subscribes to it. Subscriptions are activated on the Berwyn Heights website's home page through the 'Subscribe to News' button. Currently, there are only six subscriptions, but the number may have dropped when the previous e-newsletter was discontinued.

After further discussion, the Council agreed to publish an e-newsletter on each Friday following a worksession. The Council would review and approve the content at worksessions until a PIA has been hired. A Spanish translation is to be included in each edition and the new edition is to be advertised on the website and social media.

#### **4. Minutes**

The Council reviewed the July 8 Town Meeting minutes for edits submitted. No further changes were made, and the minutes will be adopted at the August Town meeting. Review and adoption of the July 20 worksession minutes were postponed to the Town meeting.

#### **5. Department Reports**

Mayor Dewey again noted the Pontiac Street road closure and National Night In parade. She thanked Police Clerk Muralles for organizing the event and for coming up with creative ideas to bring the community together.

CM Papanikolas reported that the Administration Department continues to perform all its tasks to keep the Town running. Interim Town Manager Allen has met with all Town departments and Councilmembers and has taken the lead on several important projects. The Town is in good hands while it is looking for a new Town Manager.

CM Brittan Powell asked whether Councilmembers will be walking in the parade. He was told that Councilmembers are welcome to participate by driving a vehicle.

CM Sweep reported that Public Works is keeping an eye out on Hurricane Isaias to determine whether trash will be collected tomorrow. If not, trash will be collected in the following days. Mayor Dewey related that Public Works last week noticed an overgrown yard belonging to a senior resident and took care of it. They also found the senior did not have air conditioning in their upstairs bedroom and took it

upon themselves to purchase and install one. Foreman Cardenas and his crew are to be commended for this act of kindness to ensure resident safety.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that NW/EP has released information about the approaching storm and is alerting residents that shelters will operate somewhat differently with the ongoing pandemic and may not be able to take in as many people as usual. Pop's Park has been reopened after health advisories were posted. A survey by the Low Impact Development Center (LIDC) regarding Pop's Park usage will remain posted online until August 5. The Recreation Council summer concerts continue with a concert by the American-made Duo scheduled for August 13.

The BHEAC is looking at ways to support students in the upcoming semester, during which instruction will be virtual. An online survey has been drafted to explore interest in 'learning pods,' in-person learning groups organized by parents to support virtual schooling for children from multiple families. BHPD is sponsoring a school supplies drive. Donations can be dropped off at the Police Station. Berwyn Heights Elementary School has is requesting help with purchasing licenses for an online math instruction module, which may be submitted to the Town Council.

CM Brittan Powell brought up several Boys & Girls Club concerns regarding Sports Park including the disposition of the hockey rink, creation of a full soccer field by removing the baseball infield, lack of activities for girls and parking around Sports Park. There ensued some discussion. TM Allen was asked to follow up with Park & Planning to get a status update on projects the Town has requested for Sports Park. Chief Antolik might be consulted about implementing a parking permit program for residential streets near the park.

#### **6. *Town Council Schedule***

The Council reviewed the upcoming schedule. The 1<sup>st</sup> worksession of September was moved to August 31 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> worksession to September 14.

#### **7. *Citizen Comments***

CM Sweep received an email complaint about litter accumulating along Kenilworth Avenue near the Pontiac Street intersection. TM Allen was requested to find out whether SHA is responsible for cleaning the area and getting on the cleanup schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk